1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

JEWELLERY.

301 The Khasis, as a people, may be said to be fond of jewellery.
326 The women are specially partial to gold and coral bead necklaces. The beads are round and large, and are usually unornamented with filigree or other work. The coral is imported from
[439] Calcutta. The gold bead is not solid, but a hollow sphere filled with lac. These necklaces are worn by men as well as women, especially on gala occasions. Some of the necklaces are comparatively valuable, e.g. that in the possession of the Mylliem Siem family. The gold and coral beads are prepared locally by Khasi as well as by foreign goldsmiths. The latter derive considerable profits from the trade. The Assam Census Report of 1901 shows 133 goldsmiths in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district, but does not distinguish between Khasis and foreigners. There are Khasi goldsmiths to be found in Mawkhar, Cherrapunji, Mawlai, and other villages. Sylheti goldsmiths are, however, more largely employed than Khasi in Mawsynram and certain other places on the south side of the hills. In Mr. Heuniker's monograph on "gold and silver wares of Assam" it is stated that the goldsmiths of Karimganj in Sylhet make specially for Khasis certain articles of jewellery, such as men's and women's earrings, &c. An article of jewellery which is believed to be peculiar to the Khasis is the silver or gold crown. This crown is worn by the young women at
301 dances, such as the annual Nongkrem dance. An illustration of one will be seen by referring to the plate. These crowns are circlets of silver or gold ornamented with filigree work. There is a peak or, strictly speaking, a spike at the back, called *u'tiew-lasubon*, which stands up some six inches above the crown. There are long ropes or tassels of silver hanging from the crown down the back. Earrings are worn both by men and women. The former affect a pattern peculiar to themselves, viz. large gold pendants of a circular or oval shape. Women wear different patterns of earrings, according to locality. An ornament which I believe is also peculiar to the Khasis is the *rupa-tylli*, or silver collar. This is a broad flat silver collar which is allowed to hang down over the neck in front, and which is secured by a fastening behind.

Silver chains are worn by men as well as by women. The men wear them round the waist like a belt, and the women hang them round their necks, the chains being allowed to depend as low as the waist. Bracelets are worn by women; these are either of gold or of silver. The Lynngam males wear bead necklaces, the beads being sometimes of cornelian gathered from the beds of the local hill streams, and sometimes of glass obtained from the plains markets of Dauara and Moiskhola. The cornelian necklaces are much prized by the Lynngams, and are called by them *'piang blei*, or gods' necklaces. Like the Garos, the Lynngams wear as many brass earrings as possible, the lobes of the ears of the females being frequently greatly distended by their weight. These earrings are made out of brass wire obtained from the plains markets. The Lynngams wear silver armlets above the elbow and also on the wrists. It is only a man who has given a great feast who can wear silver armlets above the elbows. These armlets are taken off as a sign of mourning, but never on ordinary occasions. The Lynngams do not wear Khasi jewellery, but jewellery of a pattern to be seen in the Garo Hills. A distinctive feature of the Lynngam women is the very large number of blue bead necklaces they wear. They put on such a large number as to give them almost the appearance of wearing horse collars. These beads are obtained from the plains markets, and are of glass. Further detailed information regarding this subject can be obtained from Mr. Henniker's monograph, which contains a good plate illustrating the different articles of jewellery.

WEAPONS.

The weapons of the Khasis are swords, spears, bows and arrows, and a circular shield which was used formerly for purposes of defence. The swords are usually of wrought iron, occasionally of steel, and are forged in the local smithies. The Khasi sword is of considerable length, and possesses the peculiarity of not having a handle of different material from that which is used for the blade. In the Khasi sword the handle is never made of wood or bone, or

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535 be a successful era in store for the people of the State. The
771 goddess on this occasion may be regarded as a Khasi Demeter,
796 although no mysteries form part of her services as at the
789 Grecian Eleusis. The Nongkrem ceremony and dance (now
782 held at Smit) take place in the late spring, generally in the month of May. A lucky day having been fixed, the Siem sends a ring of cane (*kyrwoh*) by way of a summons to the people of every village in the State, at the same time informing them of the date of the puja, and requesting them to attend with their offerings, consisting of goats and different articles of food. In the meantime various pujas have been taking place in the house of *Ka Siem Sad*, the Siem priestess, which it would be tedious to describe in detail. The more interesting points only will be mentioned. A fortnight before the puja and dance at Smit the *soh-blei*, or high priest, pours out libations of liquor in the *kyram-blang*, or place where the sacrificial goats are kept, and in front of the great post (of *dieng sning*, or Khasi oak), in the house of the Siem priestess. Dancing then takes place in front of the post. Later on the Siem, with the high priest and other attendant priests, walks with extremely slow gait to a small hill where a stone altar has been prepared, and sacrifices a cock in honour of *u'lei Shillong*, or the god of the Shillong Peak. A silver dish with powdered rice, liquor in a gourd (*ka'iad um*), betel-nut, and some leaves of the Khasi oak (*dieng sning*), are also necessary adjuncts of the puja. A goat is then sacrificed, and the sacrifice is followed by a dance of twenty-two men armed with swords and shields and chowries (fly-flaps). Having danced before the altar, the party returns to the house of the Siem priestess and executes another dance in the great courtyard. The Siem and certain selected persons dance in front of the *rishot blei*, or holy post
[243] of Khasi oak inside the house of the Siem priestess, the dancers being entertained with dried fish and ginger. Then
782 follows the great dance of girls and men in front of her
796 house. The girls dance in the centre, taking such tiny
535 steps, that the lifting of their feet from the ground is hardly
301 perceptible, the arms held down to the sides and the eyes
302 demurely downcast. It is on this occasion that they wear the peculiar silver (and sometimes gold) crowns illustrated in the

1: Gurdon £-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

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KHASI GIRL IN DANCING DRESS

Reproduced from a picture by Miss Kitson Scott O'Connor.

[FACING p. 150

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

plate. The hair is worn tied in a knot behind the head, but with a long tail hanging down the back. Rich silk cloths are worn by the girls, who present the appearance of being, if anything, over-clothed, or, as Yule aptly puts it, of "perfect parallelograms." They wear a profusion of gold and coral bead necklaces, silver and gold chains, bracelets, ear-rings of gold, and any other jewellery they can lay hands on. Not only is the whole of the family jewelery requisitioned by the fair *débutante* (it is only the unmarried girls who dance), but she borrows from her friends. The men dance round the outside of the circle, waving fly-flaps and prancing (often nowadays wearing huge boots) with ungainly strides. The music necessary for the dance consists of *tangmuri* (pipes), drums, and cymbals. This is *ka shad kynthei*, or the dance of the women. Then there is *ka shad mastieh*, or the dance of the men, who are gaily dressed, wearing plumes of black and white cock's feathers (*u thuiyah*) and hold swords and shields. After gyrating for some time, two men at a time rapidly approach one another and clash their swords together in mock combat. They then retire, and, after again revolving for a period, repeat the process; then other couples follow and take their place. This goes on until the dancers get tired or are told to stop.

The above description may be taken as applicable to all the Khasi dances. Dancing forms part of the ceremony of placing the ashes in the sepulchre of the clan. Dancing also forms a part of certain ceremonies performed at markets for the prosperity of the State and for the good of trade.

When I was at Mawaynram, at the time of the appointment of a Siem, I witnessed a very pretty dance called *ka shad lymmoh*, performed by men who held the leafy branches of trees in their hands. This is most effective. Then followed a dance of some forty young girls, very well dressed, covered with the usual gold and coral beads and silver chains, and wearing the silver crown, or *paumpiat*. The young women danced with great spirit, and with an absence of all shyness, but still with the greatest decorum. Many of the women, spectators as well as dancers, were observed to be without the usual *tap mah khlih*, or head-cloth, the absence of which is always a sign amongst the Khasi women of merry-making. There were

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U BAKHU, LYNNGAM HEAD MAN.

Reproduced from a picture by Miss Kirsop Scott O'Connor.
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1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

considering. Some of the leading characteristics of the Lyngams will now be detailed. The Lyngams are by complexion swarthy, with features of Mongolian type. The men are of middle height and the women remarkably short, both sexes being not nearly so robust as the Khasis, a result due probably to climatic influences, for the Lyngams live in fever-haunted jungles. The men have very little hair about the face, although a scanty moustache is sometimes seen, the hairs in the centre being carefully plucked out, the result being two tufts on either side. Beards are never seen. The women are ill-favoured, and wear very little clothing. The men wear the sleeveless coat of the Khasi and Mikir pattern, called *phong-marong*, which is made of cotton dyed red, blue, and white. This custom may have been borrowed from the Khasis. They do not grow their own cotton, but obtain it from the plains. They make their own dyes, *changlong* (red) and *kur sai-iong* (black). A cotton cloth, barely enough for purposes of decency, is tied between the legs, the ends being allowed to hang down in front and behind. Sometimes an apron is worn in front. At the present day the men wear knitted woollen caps, generally black or red, of the Nongstoin pattern (a sort of fisherman's cap), but the elderly men and head-men wear turbans. The females wear a cotton cloth about eighteen inches broad round the loins, sometimes striped red and blue, but more often only dark blue. A blue or red cloth is thrown loosely across the shoulders by unmarried girls, but married women only wear the waist-cloth, like the Garos. A cloth is tied round the head by married women, sometimes, Garo fashion. The women wear quantities of blue beads as necklaces, like their Garo sisters. They obtain the beads from the Garo markets at the foot of the hills. Brass ear-rings are worn by both sexes; the women, like the Garos, load their ears to such an extent with brass rings as to distend the holes greatly. Silver armlets are worn by the head-men only, or by those who possess the means to give a great feast to the villagers. This is the custom of the Garo *nokmas*, or head-men. Both sexes wear bracelets. The men also wear necklaces of beads. The rich wear necklaces of cornelian and another stone which is thought by the Lyngams to be valuable. A necklace of such stones is called *u'pieng bôi* (gulf's necklace).

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301 This stone is apparently some rough gum which may be picked up by the Lyngams in the river beds. A rich man amongst them, however, is one who possesses a number of metal gongs, which they call *wiang*. For these they pay very high prices. Rs. 100 being quite a moderate sum for one of them. Being curious to see one of these gongs, I asked a *sirdar*, or head-man, to show me one. He replied that he would do so, but it would take time, as he always buried his gongs in the jungle for fear of thieves. Next morning [531] he brought me a gong of bell metal, with carvings of animals engraved thereon. The gong when struck gave out a rich deep note like that of Burmese or Thibetan gongs. These gongs have a regular currency in this part of the hills, and represent to the Lyngams "Bank of England" notes. It would be interesting to try to ascertain what is their history, for no one in the Lyngam country makes them in these days. Is it possible that the Garos brought them with them when they migrated from Thibet? The gongs are well known in the Garo Hills, and I hear that when a *nokma*, or head-man, there dies his corpse is laid out upon them. They thus possess also an element of sanctity, besides being valuable for what they will fetch to the Garos or Lyngams. We may hope to hear more about them in Captain Playfair's account of the Garos.

The Lyngams do not tattoo. Their weapons are the large-headed Garo spear, the dao, and the shield. They do not usually carry bows and arrows, although there are some who possess them. They are by occupation cultivators. They sow two kinds of hill rice, red and white, on the hill-sides. They have no wet paddy cultivation, and they do not cultivate in terraces like the Nagas. They burn the jungle about February, after cutting down some of the trees and clearing away some of the debris, and then sow the paddy broadcast, without cultivating the ground in any way. They also cultivate millet and Job's-tears in the same way. With the paddy *thillim* are sown the next year. The egg plant, arum, ginger, turmeric, and sweet potatoes of several varieties are grown by them in a similar manner. Those that rear the lac-insect plant *lasdon* trees (Hindi *kusum*) in the forest clearings, and rear the insect thereon. Some of these people, however, are prohibited by a

The spectators now go to the side, the S'iem and the Rangbahs come down to the place of sacrifice, while the Soh Blei receives the utensils and the sacrificial gifts and spreads them out in order on the ground. Then he takes the rooster in both hands and calls on the god Shillong with these words: "O god Shillong, thou who hast been seated since time immemorial! (Ne Blei Shillong kumba la buh u long thwai)" With a deep bow he then offers the sacrifice five times. Rooster and goat are sprinkled with water, rice, and the flour from kpu and rymi, and are then beheaded. Then the examination of the entrails (dylhot) takes place in order to see if the sacrifice was acceptable. The way of doing that will be given below.

After the end of the sacrifice the Soh Blei and a flute player lead the sword dance, after them the S'iem and the other dancers follow in turn. Various drums are beaten alternately and flutes are played through the whole night. When night falls the goats of the S'iem and those of the various districts of the kingdom of Nongkrem are brought for the sacrifice of the next day.

The day following the great market is called ka ngi Lyngka. It is the center point and climax of the whole ceremony. From early in the morning the crowds pour in from all sides of the Khasi Mountains.

Early in the morning an unmarried girl of the royal lineage (ka S'iem ha dang khynraw) dances in the house of the S'iem sad before the ribhoi Blei. Usually a granddaughter or nearer relative of the S'iem sad is chosen for this. Two men then take the girl in their arms and carry her with a rocking motion to the large open place in front of the ling sad.

Then the great folk dance begins. In the middle of the place musicians squat on the ground and play the drums and flutes, and strike the cymbals. The music is quite without art, only a repetition of the same monotonous tones.

The women dancers move in a rather narrow circle around the musicians. Only the unmarried girls dance. The clothes they wear for it are very rich and frequently very valuable. Fine cloths, usually of red, yellow, or blue silk are draped over their bodies; the upper body and arms are covered by a satin jacket. Their hair is bound together in a bun behind their heads; a string hangs /facing p. 896. Fig. 5/ Khasi Men Dancers in front of the ling sad. Phot. P. From. Stegmüller, S. D. S. Fig. 6. Sword Dance of the Khasi. Fig. 7. S'iem sad and S'iem of Nongkrem. / /897/ down from the bun which usually ends in three tassels. The head is covered by a golden or silver crown of fine chased work, which is topped by a bunch of feathers or a bunch of artificial flowers. Around their necks they wear chains of gold or

[For illustrations, see subgroup 16, p.6 --- Ready]

301 silver and several in various sizes made of real corals. Their ear lobes are decorated with heavy earrings; shoes and stockings are not worn. Around their arms and wrists are massive silver rings or hoops, the latter being quite wide and in the same shape as cuffs. Fig. 40 shows the ornaments in detail. The very grand women dancers usually have a servant carrying an opened umbrella behind them.

535 The Khasi dance does not have the exciting and lively motions that are characteristic of our dances. Each woman dancer with her arms hanging down at her sides and her eyes cast modestly to the ground could be considered a model of modesty. Each completes her motions alone and completely independent of the others. She continuously makes a circle around the musicians, moving sideways, forwards, or backwards. At the same time the feet are kept close together and are moved seemingly so little that the motion is scarcely visible. When a woman dancer is tired she withdraws in order to rest a bit, and then enters again into the rows of the other dancers.

Figs. 8 and 9 illustrate the above description of the Khasi woman dancers. Fig. 8 shows the girls in the dance in front of the ling sād, of which only the front part may be seen above in the picture on the right.

535 292 At a proper distance from the girls the men dance in a wider circle around the place. They also have special clothing. Over the usual white cloth that covers the lower part of the body they wear a shirt, and over it a silk coat embroidered with many colors without sleeves which ends in a long fringe. Cf. Fig. 9 for this. A tail or mane of animal hair hangs down over the back. Costly coral chains decorate the breast. A bunch of artificial flowers (thuia) about 18 inches long or of black and white rooster feathers is placed in the silk turban, while the right hand holds a bunch of goat hair. The modern shoes and stockings which are now worn by many go very badly with the otherwise pretty costume.

536 The motions of the men are more lively than those of the dancing girls, but still quite relaxed. In a dawdling manner they hop from one leg to another in a childish way, without lifting their legs very much. In this way they move forward, describing a circle; at the same time they wave the bunch of hair around in the air. From time to time they stop and as a group make a bow towards the middle of the circle with a loud rejoicing shout of pleasure, while they swing the bunch of hair downwards at the same time (cf. Fig. 5).[2]

2[see category IIA, pp. 16-17 --- Analyst]

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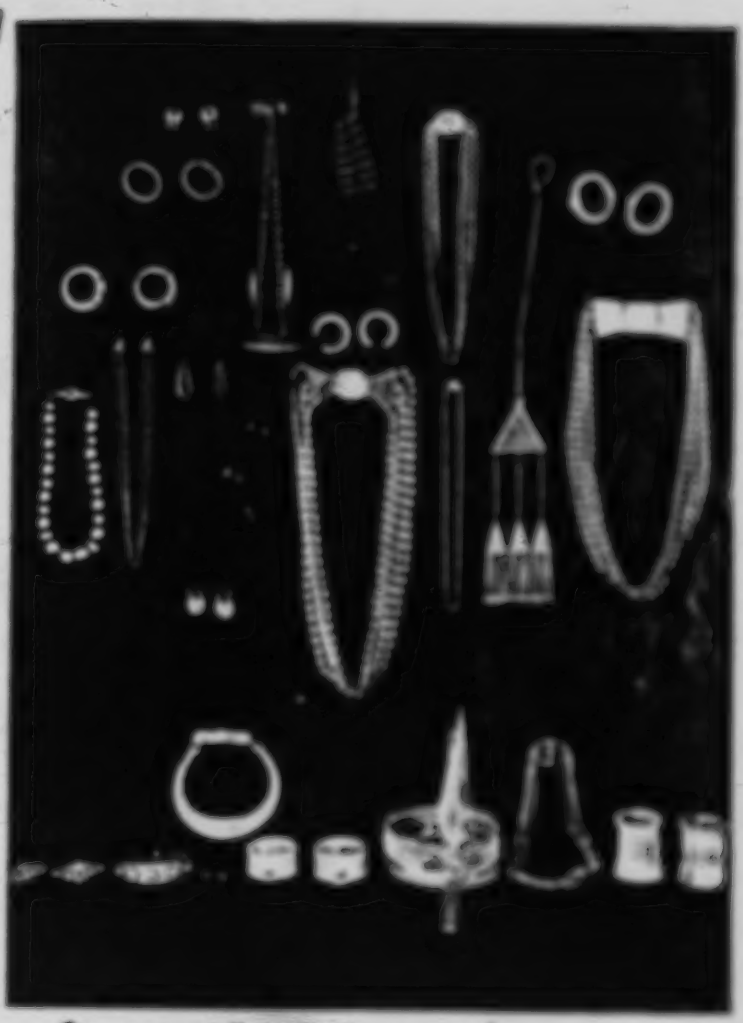

Fig. 10. Khasi Ornaments

T. Bouton-S Sd-6,5 (1910-11) 1910 ART Stock ART

division of the forest and of the steppe. The little basket is connected to a post in the hut, the special division of the clan-family are supposed to have their dwelling there; two headless twigs fastened underneath symbolize their power. The good berries are used as containers for the sacrificial drink of rice liquor.(6)

6. Cf. Die Songlewen-Puja,/The Songlewen Puja/, loc cit.

As treasures, which are handed down from generation to generation, are considered the rich ornaments of gold and silver, the heavy chains of coral, and the silk scarves, which are worn by the women at dancing ceremonies.

Also those things which the family huts contain in the way of furnishings and utensils, such as baskets, mats, looms, shields, arrows and bows, and brass pots for cooking and for water, earthen containers and brass plates are considered common property of the family.

/135/ The clan mother at the time has the entire property in her hands, she is the legal and sole guardian and manager of the property. Nothing can be lent even without her permission. No part of either the moveable or immoveable family possessions may be sold without her agreement. For the execution of the proper legal deed, as she is often ignorant of writing, she must place her fingerprint. Nothing may ever be given away: that would be an insult to the clan divinity since that would not mean increasing and lessening their property but giving it away as being of no value. As a punishment for that the clan /manes/ would also lose its other possessions and then live in poverty and disgrace. The individual members of the clan could sometimes be recruited for work for other clan-families as a kind of slave (rowa). But they may not be taken up in their society as they do not belong to that clan and the clan gods of that family would not permit it. Therefore if, for example, a clan-family has rice fields which they do not cultivate and would gladly give to poorer relatives, they must at least receive the smallest rice as a charge for it. This consists usually of a good bottle of rice liquor, which has the value of about 70 pfennigs to hence the household division.

Before the clan mother gives her permission for the sale of common property, she listens to the advice of the other members of the clan. Actually according to the old tribal custom things should be so little sold as given away. It is said that in ages past the original ancestors, when the individual clans overcame no division, apportioned out this their lands of field and wood, and these are supposed to have their unsalable clan property (complete). To be in get out of one's possession would therefore be insulting the gods. Moreover, that

small kilt), and a cap which is peaked in front and which comes down well over the ears, called (*in ngain shor*) *sar ryn*. The dress of the Khasi females is somewhat different from that of the Syntengs, the former wears a striped cloth tied round the waist, hanging down to the knees, and another cloth, with a fringed border, knotted on both the shoulders to cover the bust and a narrow cloth, called *ka jymphen*, to serve the purpose of under-clothing. A cloth knotted in front is also worn like a cloak over shoulders. The Syntang women wear a cloth knotted round the body fastened above the bust and *drooping down* to the ankles. Another cloth is thrown over the shoulders, and crossed in front. Both Khasi and Syntang women wear a cloth tied over the head, called *ka ryt sukhlain*. Up-to-date Khasi males wear boots, leggings, stockings, and boots, and hamlin shoulders. On festive occasions, both Khasis and Syntangs, males and females, wear expensive silks, with earrings of gold or silver. There is a special dancing dress of elaborate pattern. The women at festivals wear a circlet of silver with a cone-head ornament behind, rising 6 or 8 inches from the back of the head. Large coral beads are much valued, and necklaces of alternate beads of coral and gold, and sometimes of coral alone, are worn by the chiefs and their principal followers. Such necklaces are worn by women also on gala occasions. The staple diet of both Khasis and Syntangs is rice and dried fish. They are, however, fond of all kinds of meat, especially pork. Some of the Syntangs abstain from beef, owing no doubt to Hindu influences. Neither Khasis nor Syntangs eat dog, which is partaken of with zest by the Nagas and the Garo tribes,—this is owing to the dog being considered by the Khasis to be the friend of man. Neither Khasis nor Syntangs use milk, the latter being thought by them to be an excrement. Neither Khasis nor Syntangs tattoo. The weapons of both Khasis and Syntangs are bows and arrows, swords and shields. The national game of the Khasis is archery, regarding which a detailed description will be found in paragraph 11.

The people live in regular villages on flat sites which have not changed for generations,—and they appear to be much attached to these sites, where, as a rule, the family tombs are standing. The houses are [illegible] —the *Shyngkap*, or porch, where rifle and mats, and sometimes fowls, are kept; *ensyet*, or centre room, which is used for cooking and sitting in; and *-ensyet*, or inner room, where the people sleep. The houses are low, with grass roofs reaching nearly to the ground, the houses are of bare timber, the walls are of either planks roughly hewn [illegible] reeds or split bamboos plastered with clay. The Khasis' houses [illegible] usually have boarded floors raised some feet from the ground level,

(5) Gabon G.-I. (1925-1954) 1957 AR? Ekwe. AR?

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[P 36-B]

P. Banerjee E-1 (1951) 1962 AR? Khasi AR?
Smith

796 182 769 231

The goats were sacrificed by his sister's eldest son (*Sow-kiyoung*) and in charge of respective units at the open courtyard. The priests evoked the ancestors and ancestress and called upon them by name praying 'Oh, God and Goddess, I offer this sacrifice as our ancestors did. Bless the Siems, his family and the people of his state. I shall beseech you again on this day after one year. Give create favourable weather by virtue of your power, bring clouds and rains to yield bumper crops and ensure a happy and prosperous life.'

On the last day (*Nongkrem*), a man of Mawrah clan sacrificed a pig introducing an iron spike in its left armpit. Nine pieces of meat from different parts of the pig's body were again offered to their five ancestors. The Siem or the *nessena* of his *Durbar* performed the last item of festival by praying to U Blaikong, when the Chief of Nongpoh clan also followed in the same way for seeking the blessings of their Chief deity.

This brought the ritual to an end performed at the residence of Siem. The five pieces of goat's and pig's meat offered to their five ancestors, were then handed over to the in-charge of the five units considered as somewhat higher in their State organisation. They distributed them at a suitable place in their unit, making a feast as a sort of public declaration of the completion of their grandest festival for the year.

Dancing

535 796 (532)

Besides the ritual described above, dance with the accompaniment of music formed an important aspect of the festival. A dance known as *nokrongkah* had been assigned for the first, second, third and fifth day. This dance has some interesting features. It has to be performed in pairs. The first pair was constituted by Chief priest and the Chief musician. Second to fifth pairs were formed between the leaders of the right and left units of the tribe, along with an official of an council constituted the sixth pair. The subsequent pairs were formed by any two persons from the gathering. They danced only after having first bathed the deity called *Ka-Blei* (Mother) that is Siem on the fifth day. This putting on their ornaments on completion of the last rite of the festival.

[291 301]

A warrior type of dance (*Ka- and-mastieh*) was then performed in the courtyard by the musicians as well as by the multicoloured dancers (*nongrahad*) with [illegible] in the afternoon of the third day. The dance was always held in pairs first by musicians, and then dancers, who danced their traditional dance consisting of rib motion (*kumpong*) associated with feathers, coloured necklaces and (*kumpong*) silver chains and coral necklaces. Later on they joined the procession, that went to the adjacent hill where after the completion of the ceremony of goat killing, a group dance was performed returning to the residence of Siem ultimately.

[illegible 301 304]

This dance (*nokmaljor*) was performed by the Siems family. It was held early in the morning of the fourth day in the central hall (*Diem*) and also dressed themselves with gold and silver crown (*pansngiat*), numerous silver ornaments and different coloured blouse. They dressed and braided the hairs into a knot just at the nape. The High Priestess who also danced with the members of the Siems' family, stood in the middle of the line and chief musician stood at one end. They held each other in hand and danced round the fire-place of the central hall (*Diem*) in anti-clock-wise direction in accompaniment of music. The people assembled there, gave vent to their feeling in their customary way every time, before they resumed to make it form circle. Similar performance of dance were also held in the courtyard.